

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 15, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write to demand the immediate reversal of the Department of Education's (Department) decision to punitively withhold hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funds from Alexandria City Public Schools, Arlington Public Schools, Fairfax County Public Schools, Loudoun County Public Schools, and Prince William County Public Schools – a move that is directly contrary to the interests of students, parents, and educators.

These schools are high-performing, not high-risk. As former Governors, we've worked with these divisions for decades. You will find world-class technical education academies in Arlington and Loudoun, innovative early childhood programs in Alexandria, exceptional education of students who speak nearly 175 native languages in Prince William, and world-class math education in Fairfax, where more than 70% of 8th graders attain proficiency in algebra.¹ This is just a fraction of the good these school systems do, and they are a key reason why Virginia is commonly recognized as one of the premier states for education in America. Why would your Department want to punish such success?

These successful schools are being penalized for complying with the binding rules set forth by federal courts through *Grimm v. Gloucester County School Board*, which extended sex-based discrimination protections to transgender students. In the absence of a change in federal statutes or binding judicial precedent, you should not punish jurisdictions for trying to follow the law.

Your punitive actions also run counter to your stated goal of promoting parent choice and local control. The school divisions that you are targeting all have elected school boards that are directly accountable to local voters, allowing them to object to any policies regarding how students are educated. Local voters in these communities care deeply about their schools and are highly engaged in their interactions with school board members. The Department need not micromanage local policies when local citizens can change the direction of their schools, should they choose to do so.

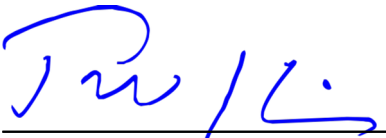
The fact that the Department is punishing these five school systems, while not taking similar action against other jurisdictions with similar policies, suggests that the asserted Title IX rationale is a pretext for political retribution. Placing these schools on "high-risk" status is unheard of and deeply troubling. Your actions will cause harm to over 386,000 students enrolled

¹ [Academic Matters at School Board Meetings | Fairfax County Public Schools](#)

across all five districts that stand to lose over \$300 million in federal funding. Most alarming, this funding directly serves the most vulnerable students, including those facing food and housing insecurity and those with disabilities.

Education is a key factor in Virginia's transformation into an economic powerhouse over the last half-century. Progress has been made under Democratic and Republican leadership. A state that deprived women and minorities of equal access to public education in our lifetimes has transformed into an opportunity-rich environment that attracts talented people and businesses from around the world to call Virginia home. Your attack on a region whose educational success has been key to that progress will stain your legacy and that of the Trump Administration. Please rethink your adversarial stance and join us in moving forward.

Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator